

The Canadian Field-Naturalist

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club Awards for 2018, presented February 2019

ELEANOR ZURBRIGG, IRWIN BRODO, JULIA CIPRIANI, CHRISTINE HANRAHAN, and KAREN MCLACHLAN HAMILTON

On 23 February 2019 members and friends of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club (OFNC) gathered for the Club's Awards Night at St. Basil's Church in Ottawa to celebrate the presentation of awards for achievements in the previous year. Awards are given to members or non-members who have distinguished themselves by accomplishments in the field of natural

history and conservation or by extraordinary activity within the Club. Four Club awards were presented for 2018, for: (1) a four-part series on birds in *Trail & Landscape*, (2) long time service managing the Club's membership program, (3) establishing and expanding Safe Wings Ottawa, and (4) nature-based education in Ottawa. As well, a President's Prize was presented.

Member of the Year: Gregory Zbitnew

This award is given in recognition of the member judged to have contributed the most to the Club in the previous year.

In 1977, two local birders, Paul Matthews and Richard Poulin, wrote a series of articles for *Trail & Landscape*, on how to find 200 species a year in the Ottawa area. Fast forward to 2017 when a suggestion was made to update those articles for *Trail & Landscape*. Gregory was asked if he was willing to do this and fortunately for us, he agreed. The result is a comprehensive survey entitled: "How to find 250 bird species in the OFNC study area in a single year".

It is no surprise that a dominant interest for OFNC members is birding. These articles have proven exceptionally valuable for all who are keen on birds whether serious birders or casual observers. Even those whose interests may lie elsewhere will find much to enjoy in this excellent series. A nod should also be given to the outstanding photos by Jacques Bouvier accompanying the articles.

The articles were published in 2018, Volume 52, one per issue starting with Number 1, and culminating with issue Number 4. Along the way, Gregory gave us informative, well-researched, valuable, and eloquent advice and suggestions on how, when, and where to look for birds.

A preamble in the first article talks about "Laying the Foundation" and covers how to find news of recent observations (for example, by checking eBird), and what comprises the OFNC study area. It includes definitions of "common", "uncommon", "rare", and other useful and important points.

Every article focusses on the birds that can be rea-

sonably found in the four seasons covered by each of the different issues. The best locations are highlighted, but not ignored are many other less-visited, excellent spots in which to search for birds. Suggestions as to where some of the seasonal specialties might be found prove especially useful. For example, in issue Number 1, a section called "Chasing Winter Birds" provides tips on where one might see winter finches, Bohemian Waxwings, some of the winter raptors, and other groups of birds more likely to be seen in winter.

Each article also gives a list of "Important Target Birds" to look for during the particular season. These lists include the uncommon to rare species that may be difficult to find but should be found with some effort. As Gregory notes, it "excludes the very rare species" that cannot reliably be predicted.

In the last issue, Number 4, Gregory provides two excellent summaries in the form of tables. In his own words, Table 1 shows the "appropriate activities/places for birding each week" through the year. Table 2 is a list of all the target species "with their usual habitat and the usual time that you can expect to see them". Therefore, at a glance, it is easy to find a bounty of relevant information to help plan birding activities.

The sheer amount of work that Gregory put into these four lengthy articles is staggering. It is clearly a labour of love, and reveals a solid and deep knowledge of the world of birds. A wealth of information is contained within this significant work. These articles will become an essential tool for anyone interested in birding, for many years to come. Indeed, they are al-

ready proving very popular.

In addition to preparing the above articles, Gregory also maintains and distributes the OFNC weekly online birding report. And as if all that is not enough, Gregory also leads birding trips for the

George McGee Service Award: Henry Steger

This award is given in recognition of a member who has contributed significantly to the smooth running of the Club over several years.

It was very fortuitous in late summer 2001 that Henry Steger was retiring soon, and after seeing an article in the *Ottawa Citizen*, dropped by and took an interest in the Fletcher Wildlife Garden (FWG) and joined the OFNC. He met David Hobden, then Chair of the Garden's Management Committee, at an OFNC monthly meeting in early 2002 and offered to volunteer.

Henry's background is in chemistry and mineral processing. His interest in botany came about by serendipity in 1981 and he has pursued it since. So upon his retirement, the FWG seemed a perfect way to follow this interest and he joined the FWG Management Committee in 2002. Apart from his role on the Management Committee, serving as Chair in 2013, he developed a new database for the bird and wildlife sightings at the FWG (computerized almost 2800 hand-written entries recorded between April 1990 and December 2017). He also developed a database for the FWG library. He participated in planning the renewal strategy for the Amphibian Pond and, more recently, in the replanting and weeding around the Amphibian Pond. He continues to help at the annual native plant sales and provides expertise on native species. Henry continues to be a member of this committee, which would make it 17 years and counting.

Henry joined the OFNC Board of Directors as a member at large in 2004 but also was a supportive voice for the FWG at Board meetings. In 2006, when the Membership Committee was about to lose its Chair, Henry graciously accepted the position. In doing so, he inherited a database system that was in desperate need of an update. Undaunted, Henry took up the challenge and developed a new system

in Microsoft Access that was tailored to the needs of the Club. As Chair, Henry maintains and updates the database on an ongoing basis due to membership changes, mostly renewals and non-renewals, but has also updated the program itself as new features were needed, for example, going to membership renewal by email. He prints the *Trail & Landscape* (T&L) mailing labels quarterly, manages the emails to members giving them the latest information on upcoming monthly events, and in 2017 created and now updates the list of Club members who want access to the Shirleys Bay causeway.

For all these reasons we are more than proud to present Gregory Zbitnew with the OFNC Member of the Year award for 2018.

(Prepared by Christine Hanrahan)

Henry is also responsible for the "Welcome New Members" seen in every issue of T&L and its "Golden Anniversary Membership List" that appears annually in the second issue. Throughout the years, Henry has written several articles for T&L. In 2010 and then in 2018 he wrote about his struggles with aster seeds collected on a mature plant in one season not growing into that same plant. Then in 2016 his article about the Tubercled Orchid was an intriguing account of his 16 year hunt for this elusive species.

In 2015 when both OFNC Vice-President positions were left vacant, Henry agreed to fill one position until others could be found. He served as OFNC Vice-President in 2015–2016.

Henry has an analytical mind, is keenly observant and is willing to express his opinions. So, when Henry speaks at Board meetings, you can be sure that it was well thought out and important enough to him to contribute to the conversation. His Jack-of-all-trades skillset was honed throughout his career, making him willing and able to tackle the varied tasks necessary to the Club. That day in 2001 may have been fortuitous, but it has been a real boon for the OFNC. Congratulations Henry for a well-deserved award.

(Prepared by Karen McLachlan Hamilton)

Conservation Award—Member: Anouk Hoedeman

This award recognizes an outstanding contribution by a member in the cause of natural history conservation in the Ottawa Valley, with particular emphasis on activities within the Ottawa District.

For 2018 we are recognizing the initiative and commitment of Anouk Hoedeman for establishing and expanding Safe Wings Ottawa, a program fo-

cussed on bird collision research, education, prevention, rescue, and short-term care.

Anouk is well known for her work with the OFNC Birds Committee, including the Falcon Watch. She launched an Ottawa chapter of the Toronto-based FLAP (Fatal Light Attraction Program) in 2014, which later evolved into Safe Wings Ottawa, a separ-

ate organization that operates as a committee of the OFNC.

Safe Wings estimates that 250 000 birds collide with glass every year in Ottawa. Anouk and her group document about 2000 to 3000 of these—the rest go unnoticed or unreported. Many dead birds are eaten by scavengers or discarded, while many injured ones are taken by predators or fly away to die elsewhere.

Safe Wings has a core team of about 15 dedicated volunteers who monitor buildings to collect data and dead bodies, rescue birds, and do what is necessary to support one another and the work they do. Anouk and her fellow volunteers have worked hard to build key relationships with groundskeepers, security guards, and maintenance staff at various buildings downtown and in other areas of the city. As they search every nook and cranny that could shelter a bird, they also educate passersby and encourage them to rescue injured birds and report window collisions. Dozens of other Safe Wings volunteers offer their support by transporting birds or helping with other tasks.

Safe Wings volunteers also conduct outreach activities, make presentations to various groups on preventing bird collisions, and provide advice on designing bird-friendly buildings and on retrofitting existing buildings. Anouk's personal efforts have resulted in the National Capital Commission, Public Services and Procurement Canada, the University of Ottawa, and Carleton University adopting bird-friendly design approaches. In addition, she initiated

the City of Ottawa's development of bird-friendly design guidelines, which are expected to come into effect this year.

As a result of its reputation, Safe Wings now receives thousands of calls every year for rescue support from individuals and organizations throughout eastern Ontario and western Quebec, including the City of Ottawa, the Ottawa Valley Wild Bird Care Centre, and even the Cornwall SPCA, to name a few.

Because there is such a demand for help, especially outside the Wild Bird Care Centre's operating hours, Anouk obtained federal and provincial rehabilitation permits so she could provide medication, fluids, and other life-saving treatment to injured and sick birds. In 2018, Anouk cared for 742 patients on the third floor of her home, which has been transformed into a short-term rehabilitation centre set up with a variety of cages to accommodate and keep birds safe, warm, and fed until they can be released or transferred to the Wild Bird Care Centre. All of this care also requires keeping the space clean, organized, and stocked with supplies ready for injured birds which may arrive at any time. It all makes for unpredictable demands on her time, and a steep learning curve to determine how to handle different species ranging from hummingbirds to raptors.

We are pleased to recognize the commitment and work of Anouk Hoedeman with this Conservation Award.

(Prepared by Julia Cipriani)

Mary Stuart Education Award: Bill McMullen

This award is given to a member, non-member, or organization, in recognition of outstanding achievements in the field of natural history education in the Ottawa Region.

This year's Mary Stuart Education Award goes to Bill McMullen, a teacher at the Trillium Public School in Orléans on the eastern edge of Ottawa. Bill grew up in a rural community in the Kawartha Lakes region of central Ontario. There, he was able to spend his childhood years exploring the local forests and fields developing a strong interest in the natural world. As a primary school teacher, he found that he could pass on that passion to his students.

On field trips and in the classroom, Bill teaches his young students to be observant of the world around them, and to explore even the small nooks and crannies in search of stories that nature can tell us and to experience the "quiet" of the woods. He teaches them the importance of the environment and the interrelationships between humans, plants, and animals and encourages them to feel they can be a steward of the Earth. Although Bill is an English and math teacher,

his knowledge of the natural world gives him the tools he needs. For example, he educates his charges by setting up orienteering courses and taking them skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking. He has even taught children astronomy using his personal telescope.

Bill is also a talented and dedicated nature photographer, spending many hours in the field, especially at the MacSkimming Outdoor Education Centre, photographing plants, mushrooms, and wildlife. He often makes videos to show phenomena that occur after school hours or over a long period of time at the MacSkimming Centre (such as a Monarch Butterfly emerging from a chrysalis, or wildlife that passes by a video cam set up on a trail over a period of three months). He incorporates his photos and videos into his own lessons as often as he can and offers them to other teachers at his school to use with their own classes. He also generously shares these videos online. Bill has donated many of his photos and videos to the MacSkimming Centre for their education programs and also gives students instruction on nature photography. He has also led evening walks

with school children to see and hear owls, resulting in experiences some youngsters will cherish their entire lives.

By sharing his experience and experiences with his students, Bill McMullen is an example of the kind of teacher who makes a difference. His students are better equipped to understand the conservation issues

of the day, hopefully someday translating that appreciation into action for the benefit of the natural world. The Mary Stuart Education Award is a fitting tribute to his vision, skill, energy, and dedication.

(Prepared by Irwin Brodo based on input from staff at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board)

President's Prize: Ann MacKenzie

This award is given at the President's discretion in recognition of a member for unusual support of the Club and its aims.

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club is blessed to have members with an interest in natural history but with expertise that serves the Club in areas of management and administration. Ann Mackenzie is such a person. She has served the Club very well in the role of President (2012–2013), Past President (2014–2016), and Treasurer (since 2017). I thank her for this.

However, I am recognizing Ann for her on-going work on the Club's financial sustainability and for her dedication to promote financial professionalism and accountability within the Club. If one reviews how the Club's financial operations have changed, there is a constant theme. That is, Ann has striven to enhance the Club's awareness of its financial responsibilities and execution. Today's Club financial procedures and policies have been modernized and in some areas revolutionized.

Before Ann became President, the Club was running unsustainable deficits. Yet there was no attempt to address this issue. Ann dared to suggest an increase in annual fees for the first time in almost 18 years. The practice of a separate fee for paper copies of *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* was implemented. And she fully supported the project to put *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* online to reduce costs.

In November 2015, Ann responded to an announcement of changes to the Ontario *Not-for-Profit Corporations Act* with a review and update of the long-obsolete Articles and By-Laws of the Club's Constitution. This also included a call for all Club

committees to update their Terms of Reference. The job is not over. The proclamation of that Act has been delayed.

The receipt of a large bequest from Violetta Czasak led to Ann's recognizing future potential problems with regard to financial management and transparency. She subsequently developed an OFNC Investment Guidelines Policy and initiated the development of Club policy to administer bequests. The latter has supported local community projects in natural history and scientific research projects and has brought increased public recognition for the Club.

Each January the Board of Directors has first-time members. Ann, and probably only she, recognized the need for a guide to help these members become familiar with their roles and expectations. She published the March 2018 Directors' Handbook that all Directors have access to online.

Lastly, Ann has changed how the office of the Treasurer operates. In the past, the Treasurer did it all by his/herself. Within the last year, she brought in "new" volunteers to assist with investment management and the receipt of monies from membership and donations. Hopefully they will stay in the Club and make other contributions in future. It must also be mentioned that Ann has brought in online payment by the Treasurer of financial claims from Club members and the automated printing of income tax receipts for donations.

I wish to award Ann the President's Prize for 2018, with very best wishes and congratulations.

(Prepared by Henry Steger and Diane Lepage, President)

